

2006

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council Annual Report to the Governor

MVR Stats at a Glance

- In 2006, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) provided services to 4,407 consumers who were engaged in an Individualized Plan of Employment.
- The total cost for the entire VR work program was \$15.5 million.
- 909 Montanans with disabilities went to work in 2006 with the assistance of Montana Vocational Rehabilitation.
- 76% of total cases served were severely disabled, while 82% of rehabilitated cases were severely disabled.
- Noteworthy Statistics:
 - Average MVR Consumer Wage Per Hour = \$9.74
 - Combined Annual Salaries of MVR Consumers for 2006 = \$13.4 million
 - Average hours worked per week = 30 hours

Council Message

On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council, I am proud to present the Annual Report to the Governor for 2006.

The Council is committed to our mission of advising and working with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. To that end, we actively promoted and supported the funding and operation of the VR Program through multiple activities across the state. This report highlights many of those activities, accomplishments and recommendations and also provides dramatic data showing the effectiveness and importance of the function of VR to Montana's citizens, economy and society where every person is valued.

This past fiscal year, MVR served 7,771 Montanans with disabilities, and 909 of those consumers went to work as a result of services provided. The total annual earnings of those consumers who went to work reached \$13.4 million, with an average hourly wage of \$9.74. Again this year, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (MVR) proved itself to be a cost effective program that adds to the economic viability of this state and lends dignity and purpose to our citizens by helping persons with disabilities return to work.

In addition to its "work" program, MVR serves Montanans with disabilities in its Independent Living Program (1,426 consumers), Older Blind Program (745 consumers), Extended Employment Program (287 consumers), Montana Telecommunications Access Program, Visual Medical Program (89 consumers), and Business Enterprise Program (5 vending routes).

Through this report, we confirm the commitment of the Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council members who, for the past twelve months, have worked diligently on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Our Council is committed to assisting and advising Montana Vocational Rehabilitation in empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive employment and independence in their communities.

Dick Trerise, Vice Chair
Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council

Success Stories

MVR serves consumers with all types of disabilities. This year we have chosen to feature success stories of consumers who are most significantly disabled, and who were able to maintain successful community employment, which resulted in their no longer having to rely on Social Security disability benefits

John was in a motorcycle accident in July 1999, which resulted in quadriplegia. John applied for Montana Vocational Rehabilitation in June 2001. John and his MVR counselor developed his Individualized Plan of Employment in August 2001. His vocational goal was to work as a Chemical Dependency Counselor. The plan was designed for him to achieve a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies with a Chemical Dependency Counseling option. With MVR assisting him with tuition and books, John completed this degree during the summer of 2005. John immediately went to work as a Chemical Dependency counselor. His case was closed with MVR as successfully rehabilitated and employed in August 2005.

Dan first applied for Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Services at the age of 48. He applied for services based on a long history of mental illness. Dan had worked most of his adult life up until 1996. He was very good at getting jobs, but simply could not keep them. After years of struggling, he realized his employment problems had a lot to do with his mental illness, and he eventually went on Social Security disability. When Dan first started working with his MVR counselor, he was frustrated, tired of not having enough income, and had a strong desire to return to work. After some counseling and guidance, career exploration, and a community assessment, Dan decided that he wanted to build on his interest in computers. It was an area in which he had a strong interest, some experience and appeared to be the most compatible with his disability and limitations imposed by his symptoms. MVR funded Dan in training that would give him the certifications he needed to work as a computer technician. MVR also offered him the assistance of a job placement specialist who helped him with his job search, and eventually assisted him in securing a position as a computer tech. The job he accepted allowed him to work on his own, gave him enough income to get off of Social Security disability benefits, and allowed him the flexibility to maintain his mental health program.

Native American Vocational Rehabilitation

Each year, this report highlights one of the state's six Native American Vocational Rehabilitation projects. This year the Fort Belknap Vocational Rehabilitation Program (FBVRP) is featured. FBVRP has provided culturally relevant VR services to Tribal members who reside on the Fort Belknap Indian reservation with the VR grant funded under the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administrations since 1995. The FBVRP program is located in the Red Whip Center East Offices which are handicapped accessible.

This past year the FBVRP has exceeded the proposed numbers of clients for the year. Despite employment barriers such as lack of transportation and child care, the program has successfully met the proposed number of closures at 80% successfully closed. The grant has a strong emphasis on career strategies and job readiness/preparedness for all consumers as well as integrating cultural activities/training.

Tribal and State programs serving persons with disabilities have had excellent collaboration including cross training in culturally relevant competencies this past year. These programs include: State VR Council, Independent Living, Blind and Low Vision, Medicaid Infrastructure grant, Traumatic Brain Injury Association the Client Assistance Program.

Program Staff include: Mavis Young Bear, FBVRP Director; James Fox, Career Counselor; Annette Horn, Transition Counselor; Edward Moore, Job Placement/Cultural Coordinator; Bobbi Brown, Secretarial Tech; Tyna Williams-Manual, GED Remedial Tutor/ Job Training; Thomas Shawl, Finance and Records; and John Horseman, Custodian.

MVR Council Mission Statement

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Council advises and works with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to improve policies, programs, delivery of services to consumers, and methods for reaching potential consumers and employers.

Council Accomplishments

- The Council provided a forum for cultural education by holding a Council meeting on the Fort Belknap Reservation. Mavis Young Bear provided cultural training for the entire Council. In addition, all of the Tribal 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Projects attended this meeting.
- With the Council's encouragement, MVR presented at the statewide Transitions Conference, Parents Lets Unite for Kids (PLUK), and the Deaf Conference.
- A member of the Council produced a video on disability awareness: one copy was given to the Governor's Office.
- The MVR Council Public Relations Committee has been increasing public awareness through activities such as television appearances, press releases for radio and print, and letters to the editor.
- The Council supported funding of the Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF)

Council Recommendations

- Continue to support the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, which will provide extended health care coverage to employed consumers.
- Strengthen and expand connections with the business community to improve employment opportunities for consumers.
- Continue to hold the summer Council meeting on a reservation. Promote cultural training for the Council members and for MVR counselors that serve on the reservations.

MVR Council Members

Arlene Templer - Pablo, David Boyd, Sr.- Poplar, Denise Corrao - Miles City, Jim Daily - Butte, Don Jones - Helena, Carol Lambert-Broadus, Ronald Mills - Miles City, Dennis Moore-Billings, Wayne Nankivel - Helena, Ruth Straley - Helena, Dick Trerise - Helena, Claudette Vance - Kalispell, Dan Burke - Missoula, Jacqueline Colombe - Basin, Faith Dawson - Missoula, Dalayna Faught - Missoula, Maureen Kenneally - Butte, Sharla LaFountain - Great Falls, Paul Pearson - Anaconda, Michelle Williamson - Pablo

